

EASTERN WHITE PINE (Pinus strobus L.)

BRIEF HISTORY

The lumber industry in Canada was founded upon White Pine over 300 years ago. By 1800, Great Britain's vast navy was relying on domestic supplies of Oak as well as pine harvested in countries bordering on the Baltic Sea. These massive pines were transformed into ships' masts the rigid criteria for which were in part: main masts were not less than one metre across and 36 metres tall. Bow sprits not less than 76 centimetres by 27 metres. They also had to be perfectly straight and completely flawless.

The rise of Napoleon and his subsequent control of the Baltic ports ended British access to these Baltic pines. The Royal Navy turned to Canada, but found that the most accessible timber, that which grew in the eastern maritime regions of Canada, proved to be insufficient in size and quality. The focus then shifted to Ontario, and thus an enterprise that might otherwise have taken many more decades to establish efficient infrastructure was accelerated by the navy's urgent need. Concurrently, commercial interests in the British Isles began seeking Ontario White Pine, as their previous source had also been in the Baltic region.

MURRAY BROS. LUMBER

Murray Bros Lumber is situated adjacent to the northern edge of the White Pine arboreal region of North America. This brings into play several factors which result in a high quality of White Pine to this day as well as a sustainable supply of timber.



In 1871 Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, first expressed the notion that the Canadian forests were not endless, and that steps had best be taken to look after woodlands for the future. Algonquin Park was created in 1893. This vast tract of wilderness was designated a conservation area and remains so to this day. Logging is restricted to only those practices prescribed by government foresters, and to those companies complying with and adhering to strict guidelines of forest sustainability.

The Murray Bros. Woodlands managers have the luxury of choosing from Crown timber, access to which has been earned for over 100 years by proper timber limit custody, and the privately owned and carefully managed properties which the company has assiduously obtained and nurtured over the same period of time.

WHITE PINE GROWTH IN THE ALGONQUIN REGION

The White Pine grown in this area of Ontario benefits and thrives due to natural factors. The soil in the region has remained ideal for White Pine root development, thus for stem health as well. It has been virtually undisturbed over the centuries: sandy soil with thin strata of moderately fine material at a depth of between 2 to 4 feet.

This leads to greater cell strength in the summerwood annual growth production. The location of this timber in the northern perimeter of the White Pine Forest also results in a much shortened growing season, thus much less summerwood overall in relation to trees growing further south. The well known stability of White Pine is thereby enhanced by its very location near the Murray Bros. operation site.

In addition is at least one other symbiotic relationship that enhances the robustness of Algonquin White Pine, that being the presence, in vast numbers, of the low-bush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). The low-bush roots are laden with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, creating a nitrogen-rich and fertile soil in which pine thrives. The low-bush in turn does well growing in the heavy shade canopy of the pine forest and in the acidic soil surface layer created by the blanket of fallen pine needles.

White Pine produces the most valuable softwood lumber in Eastern Canada. Because of its low shrinkage and uniform texture, it is used extensively for window sashes and frames. Other important uses are for doors, moulding, organ building and cabinet work. It has been especially valued, because of its stability, for pattern-making in metal foundry work.

We at Sykes Timber are proud of our long standing relationship with Murray Brothers Lumber which spans several generations of our families. We are sole suppliers of Murray's pine in the U.K.